

# "One pill can kill" Nurse creates fentanyl task force following daughter's tragic death

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BUNCOMBE COUNTY, N.C. (WLOS) — A local mom is facing an unimaginable loss head on, in hopes of saving others.

August 31 marks International Overdose Awareness Day, when families come together to remember and honor those who have died from addiction.

It's a day to remember people like 26-year-old Alexandra.

Her mother Debbie Krueger says Alexandra was a nursing assistant who wanted to help everyone she met. She says Alexandra had been in and out of rehab centers, battling drug addiction for 10 years.

"I want her life to mean something," Krueger says. "I want her death to mean something."

She overdosed in December of 2020.

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"Her toxicology report came back and it was almost pure fentanyl," Krueger says. "Now, she was 26 with a seven-year-old son."

Alexandra's young son was left without a mother, and her mother was left with a mission.

"This is much bigger than monkeypox, this is much bigger than COVID, in terms of wiping out a whole generation," Krueger says.

She's a registered nurse and the director of nursing practice and governance with Mission Health. So, she decided to start a fentanyl task force in June.

"There's a lot of stigma associated with addiction so it's not just the addict who's buying street drugs that's affected, this can affect anyone, because one pill can kill," she says.

With doctors, nurses, law enforcement and community leaders, Krueger says she hopes to raise awareness about the dangerous drug while dropping the stigma of addiction.

"As we build that army to start responding to the drug dealers and push our elected officials and push education I think we can really make a difference," she says.



*Photo of Krueger family - Following her daughter's tragic death due to a drug overdose in 2020, Debbie Krueger, a registered nurse with Mission Health, created a fentanyl task force in June 2022. She says the group aims to raise awareness about the dangerous drug while dropping the stigma of addiction. (Photo credit: WLOS Staff)*

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She adds that fentanyl is the largest killer of young people right now:

***Fentanyl is the largest killer of 18-25 year olds in the US, in North Carolina, and in Western North Carolina.***

**According to the state**, just last month across North Carolina there were more than 800 opioid overdose visits to emergency rooms and more than a hundred were from fentanyl.

Krueger says she believes talking to everyone, even young kids about the danger, will help save lives in the mountains.

"We need to take responsibility, we need to talk about it, we need to assume the worst and hope for the best, and double check, validate all along the way," she says.

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And she hopes the campaign will also honor the daughter she lost.

"A nine-year-old grandson who we are raising puts it in perspective in terms of, there's a love for her there," she says.

To honor international Overdose Awareness Day, there is an event Wednesday evening at Carrier Park in Asheville. It's a remembrance ceremony for all lives lost from addiction and will be held from 5-8 p.m.

Another event, Pediatric Safety Day, will be held on Sept. 24 from 10-2 p.m. at the Asheville Outlets.